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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5328
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3056
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2921
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000765

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL

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TAGS: PGOV KCRM SOCI TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: "DRUG GODMOTHER" ARRESTED IN DASHOGUZ PROVINCE

ASHGABAT 00000765 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: The acting Chief of the State Counter-Narcotics Service (SCNS) reported at the June 12 session of the Cabinet of Ministers about a recently identified group of drug traffickers led by a female resident of Dashoguz. In the course of investigations conducted jointly by Turkmen law enforcement agencies, the "Drug Godmother" from this northern province was arrested, together with her closest relatives, for involvement with large shipments of heroin. The ringleader's property was confiscated and her admission of guilt and request for forgiveness was broadcast on local television. President Berdimuhamedov stressed that efforts to combat drug trafficking and abuse should be carried out at the national level, as well as through transnational efforts. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) On June 12, at the Cabinet of Minister's session chaired by President Berdimuhamedov, the acting Chief of the State Counter-Narcotics Service, Major Serdar Batyrov, reported on the detection of a group of people, led by a female resident of Dashoguz Province, engaged in the trafficking and illicit distribution of large quantities of illegal narcotics. Law enforcement officers of the Ministry of National Security, Prosecutor General's Office and Police carried out an investigation based on information provided by the SCNS and detained the "Drug Godmother" Rakhatay Razzakova and her close relatives. An ethnic Uzbek, Razzakova reportedly had delivered large batches of heroin to Turkmenistan since ¶2004. As was revealed, she used the income obtained from the sale of narcotics to buy several houses, apartments, shops, cars and other property in Dashoguz and Ashgabat. The majority of the property was registered in her relatives' names and in the name of other persons. As material evidence

of her illegal activities, a television broadcast showed the confiscated goods, including heroin, large amounts of cash in USD and local manats, gold and diamond jewelry, cars, trucks, apartments, houses, shops and a beauty salon.

¶4. (U) Following the Cabinet of Minister's session, a locally-broadcast meeting to condemn the drug dealers was held at the governor's office in Dashoguz province.

The meeting was attended by representatives of public organizations, community elders, representatives of law enforcement and military agencies, and employees of the mayors' offices of districts and cities in Dashoguz province. The meeting participants noted that there was no place for such wrongdoers in their society and condemned Razzakova for her illegal activities.

¶5. (U) Razzakova, who had been prosecuted previously, was amnestied in 2004 with the hope that she had been rehabilitated. Following the televised public criticism, Razzakova, who was present at the meeting, made a public confession of her guilt. The weeping "Drug Godmother" said, "My name is Rakhatay Razzakova, born in 1961. I earlier served a prison sentence in 2004 for selling narcotic drugs. Now in 2009, I was detained again for drug trafficking. I made large amounts of money selling this stuff [narcotics], bought apartments in Ashgabat and built houses here [in Dashoguz city] and I was blinded by such wealth. I promise that I will never ever do such things again. Now I regret going to prison again, leaving behind my children and grandchildren. I promise before our people and our esteemed President that I will never do such evil again."

ASHGABAT 00000765 002.2 OF 002

¶6. (SBU) As usual, government officials failed to announce publicly the quantity of seized drugs. Political/Economic Assistant learned from a contact, whose brother works as a section chief in SCNS, that there were different amounts of narcotics seized at different properties in Dashoguz. Reportedly, there were three batches of five, ten and 100 kilos of drugs, respectively, (most likely heroin) seized from Razzakova. A local UN Office on Drugs and Crime official, who also tried to find out from government officials the exact amount of seized drugs, was told that "several dozen kilos" of heroin were detected.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: Commenting on SCNS' report, President Berdimuhamedov said that despite the measures taken in the country to control illicit drug trafficking, the problem had not been eliminated. He then focused on the need to coordinate efforts to combat drug trafficking and abuse at the national and international levels. Such remarks suggest that the SCNS might be allowed to engage in further cooperation with international donors.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: Although government officials did not disclose the amount of drugs seized in this case, it can be assumed that the amounts were significant since the case was given so much public attention. It was probably no coincidence that the case was reported at a Cabinet meeting shortly before observance of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26. Such a major drug seizure may help to boost Major Batyrov's credentials in the President's eyes, leading him to appoint Batyrov permanently to the position that he has been holding as the acting chief for almost half a year. END COMMENT.

MILES